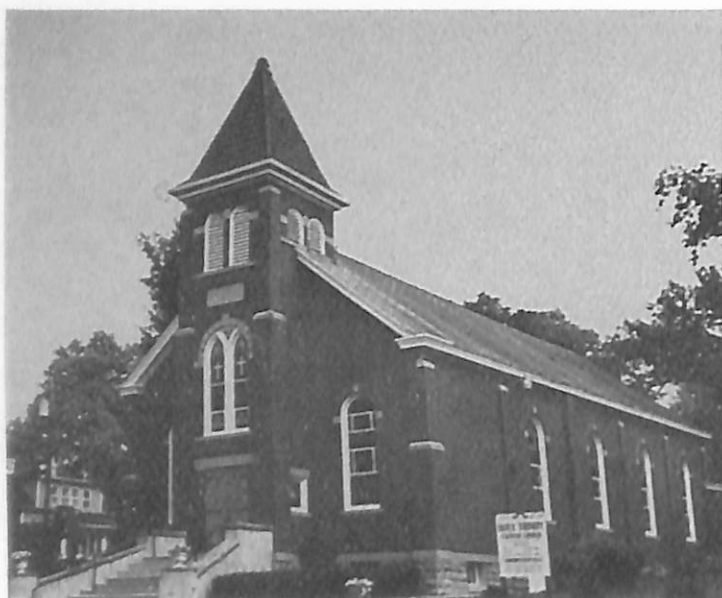




Holy Trinity Church celebrated its 75th Anniversary in 1985.

"Uncle Bill" was not to be denied. With a sudden upward sweep, he dislodged the wallet from its owner's hand, retrieved the basket to the center aisle, and ceremoniously removed the wallet's entire contents, reported to be \$40.00 to \$50.00, a substantial sum in that era. He then calmly tossed the empty wallet back, and grinning broadly, continued his rounds. Onlookers bit their lips and muffled snickers.

What words or actions may have followed between the two is not known. What is known, however, is that these men remained life-long friends and perpetrated many a practical joke upon one another, and upon other members of the parish, for decades.

Members of the Craver family have figured prominently in the affairs of the parish for well over a century, as they do today. The name, however, is an anglicization of the surname of Prussian immigrants, originally spelled Kraber. It is futile to try to ascribe national origin to the family names of St. Philomena parish on the basis of sound or spelling.

In 1927, Father Evers was replaced by Father Earl Binsette. Father Binsette served four years and was reassigned to St. Mary Church, in Springfield, Ohio, in 1931.

Father Edward Stuhlmuehler arrived at Stonelick in 1931. He was a practical man and a good administrator. His pastorate lasted a full decade, longer than any pastor, save Father Navarron, in the history of the parish.

Some insight into the nature of life in a rural parish can be gained from this story, attributed to Mrs. Clara Brousch. "The priest's garden was visible from the sacristy window. During Mass, he looked out and saw his pigs in the garden. He chanted (in German) 'The pigs are in the cabbage patch, the pigs are in the cabbage patch.'"

"A couple of the parishioners went out to the garden and drove the pigs back to their pen."

Catholics are required to fulfill the "Easter duty," that is, to go to confession and to receive Communion at least during the Easter season, which begins Ash Wednesday and ends on Trinity Sunday. Those less diligent in their faith, for whatever reasons, deferred these duties until the last opportunity. On Trinity Sunday, the line at the confessional would be long, delaying Mass, and irritating the "regulars."

Thus, Trinity Sunday acquired a unique nickname at St. Philomena, inferring some questionable repute upon these last-minute penitents. That particular Sabbath is known to this day as "Horse Thief Sunday."

The hardships of the Great Depression were not felt so acutely in the remote parish in Stonelick as they were in the major cities, but were certainly not unnoticed. Still, there was no "dust



The old stable at St. Philomena, circa 1906.

bowl" here, and the primarily agricultural community continued with less disruption, generally, than the world around it.

And parish life went on. As with virtually every parish in the United States, economic depression resulted in decreased collections. To bolster parish income to meet expenses, activities were begun which, while primarily intended as fund-raisers, became social focal points as well. There was an annual festival, with booths set up in the yard east of the church building. The country dinners, with fresh, home-grown produce, locally raised, prime quality meat and poultry, home-made pies and ice cream, quickly grew popular all over the area, and drew patrons from many miles.

These were hard work for the parishioners, but the congregation at "St. Phil's" was accustomed to that. They were successful financially, primarily because all of the labor, and most of the material, was donated. But perhaps most important, these activities drew the parish even closer together and made the hard times a little more bearable.

Although no one recalls exactly when they began, the monthly card parties, which have become a tradition and continue to this day, probably sprang from this era. They, too, drew patrons from some distance, and still do. The games are Euchre and 500, the traditional rural favorites dating to frontier days.

The prizes are not cash, but items donated by parishioners, and include, frequently, even now, fresh eggs, home-grown produce, in season, and other farm products, as well as "store-bought" items.

The patrons are loyal, and the same names appear on tallies, literally, for decades. The play is serious, and friendly competition is spirited, indeed. The monetary value of the prizes is modest. The prize is not the point. The fellowship, and winning, are the important things. Here, too, refreshments are always home-made and well-received. These events continue, held the evening of the fourth Sunday of each month, except during the harshest months of winter, December, January and February.